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## The Lincoln Life-Mask and How it was Made

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BY LEONARD W. VOLK.

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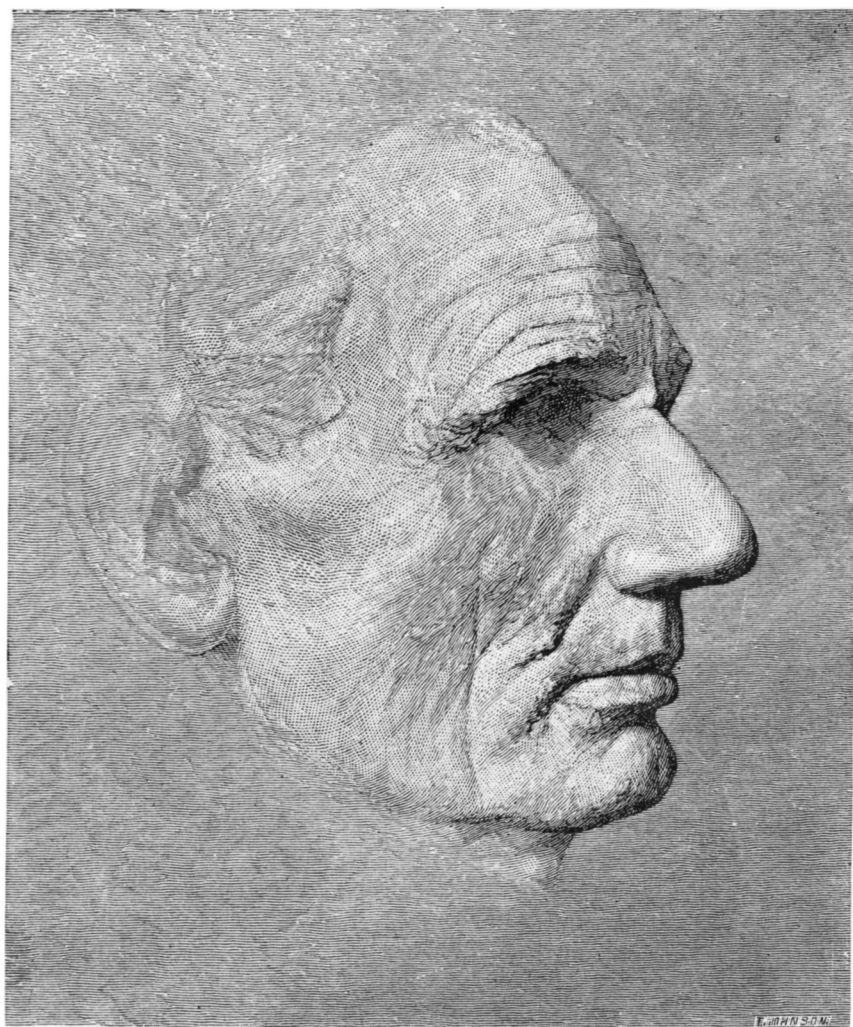
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My first meeting with Abraham Lincoln was in 1858, when the celebrated senatorial contest opened in Chicago between him and Stephen A. Douglas. I was invited by the latter to accompany him and his party by a special train to Springfield, to which train was attached a platform-car having on board a cannon, which made considerable noise on the journey. At Bloomington we all stopped over night, as Douglas had a speech to make there in the evening. The party went to the Landon House, the only hotel, I believe, in the place at the time.

While we were sitting in the hotel office after supper, Mr. Lincoln entered, carrying an old carpet-bag in his hand, and wearing a weather-beaten silk hat,—too large, apparently, for his head,—a long loosely fitting frock-coat of black alpaca, and vest and trousers of the same material. He walked up to the counter, and, saluting the clerk pleasantly, passed the bag over to him, and inquired if he was too late for supper. The clerk replied that supper was over, but thought enough could be “scraped up” for him.

“All right,” said Mr. Lincoln, “I don’t want much.”

Meanwhile, he said he would wash the dust off; he was certainly very dusty, for it was the month of June and quite warm. While he was so engaged several old friends, who had learned of his arrival, rushed in to see him, some of them shouting out, “How are you, Old Abe?” Mr. Lincoln grasped



**LINCOLN LIFE MASK**

By Leonard W. Volk

them by the hand in his cordial manner, with the broadest and pleasantest smile on his rugged face. This was the first good view I had of the "coming man," though I had seen him at a distance, and passed him on the sidewalk in Chicago a few days before.

Mr. Lincoln was on the platform in front of the court house when Mr. Douglas spoke, and replied to the Senator when he had finished. I regretted to hear some hard words which passed between them while Mr. Douglas was speaking.

The next day we all stopped at the town of Lincoln, where short speeches were made by the contestants, and dinner was served at the hotel, after which and as Mr. Lincoln came out on the plank walk in front, I was formally presented to him. He saluted me with his natural cordiality, grasping my hand in both his large hands with a vice-like grip and looking down into my face with his beaming dark, dull eyes, said:

"How do you do? I am glad to meet you. I have read of you in the papers; you are making a statue of Judge Douglas for Governor Matteson's new house?"

"Yes, sir," I answered; "and sometime, when you are in Chicago and can spare the time, I would like to have you sit to me for your bust."

"Yes, I will, Mr. Volk—shall be glad to, the first opportunity I have."

All were soon on board the long train, crowded with people going to hear the speeches at Springfield. The train stopped on the track, near Edwards' Grove, in the northern outskirts of the town, where staging was erected and a vast crowd waiting under the shade of the trees. On leaving the train, most of the passengers climbed over the fences and crossed the stubble-field, taking a short cut to the grove, among them Mr. Lincoln who stalked forward alone, taking immense strides, the before-mentioned carpet-bag and an umbrella in his hands and his coat-skirts flying in the breeze. I managed to keep pretty close in the rear of the tall, gaunt figure, with the head craned forward, apparently much over the balance, like the Leaning Tower of Pisa that was moving something like a hurricane across that rough stubble-field. He ap-

proached the rail fence, sprang over it as nimbly as a boy of eighteen, and disappeared from my sight. Soon after, and while Douglas was speaking, Mr. Lincoln suddenly re-appeared in the crowd, mounted upon a fine, spirited horse.

In the evening I went to hear him speak in the Hall of Representatives of the old State House. He spoke with much deliberation and earnestness and I thought there was sadness in his tone of voice; he reminded his friends of the difficulty of carrying the State for himself, owing to the way in which it was districted at the time, and cautioned them not to be over-sanguine—to be prepared for defeat; if they wished for victory, no stone must be left unturned.

I did not see him again for nearly two years. I spent most of the winter of 1860 in Washington, publishing a statuette of Senator Douglas, and just before leaving, in the month of March, I called upon Mr. Douglas' colleague in the Senate from Illinois and asked him if he had an idea as to who would be the probable nominee of the Republican party for president, that I might model a bust of him in advance. He replied that he did not have the least particle of an idea who he would be, only that it would not be Judge Douglas.

I returned to Chicago, and got my studio in the "Portland Block" in order and ready for work, and began to consider whose bust I should first begin in the clay, when I noticed in a morning paper that Abraham Lincoln was in town—retained as one of the counsel in a "sand-bar" trial in which the Michigan Central Railroad was either plaintiff or defendant. I at once decided to remind him of his promise to sit to me, made two years before. I found him in the United States District Courtroom (in a building known at the time as the "Larmon Block") his feet on the edge of a table, one of his fingers thrust into his mouth, and his long, dark hair standing out at every imaginable angle, apparently uncombed for a week. He was surrounded by a group of lawyers, such as James F. Joy, Isaac N. Arnold, Thomas Hoyne and others. Mr. Arnold obtained his attention in my behalf, when he instantly arose and met me outside the rail, recognizing me at once with his usual grip of both hands. He remembered his

promise and said in answer to my question, that he expected to be detained by the case for a week. He added:

"I shall be glad to give you the sittings. When shall I come and how long will you need me each time?"

Just after breakfast, every morning, would, he said, suit him the best, and he could remain till court opened, at ten o'clock. I answered that I would be ready for him the next morning, Thursday. This was in the early part of April, 1860.

"Very well, Mr. Volk, I will be there, and I'll go to a barber and have my hair cut before I come."

I requested him not to let the barber cut it too short, and said I would rather he would leave it as it was; but to this he would not consent. Then, all of a sudden, he ran his fingers through his hair and said:

"No, I cannot come tomorrow, as I have an engagement with Mr. W—— to go to Evanston tomorrow and attend an entertainment; but I'd rather come and sit to you for the bust than go there and meet a lot of college professors and others, all strangers to me. And I will be obliged if you will go to Mr. W——'s office now and get me released from the engagement. I will wait here till you come back."

So off I posted, but Mr. W—— would not release him, because he said it would be a great disappointment to the people he had invited. Mr. Lincoln looked quite sorry when I reported to him the failure of my mission.

"Well," he said, "I suppose I must go, but I will come to you Friday morning."

He was there promptly—indeed, he never failed to be on time. My studio was in the fifth story and there were no elevators in those days, and I soon learned to distinguish his steps on the stairs, and am sure he frequently came up two if not three steps at a stride. When he sat down the first time in that hard, wooden, low-armed chair which I still possess, and which has been occupied by Douglas, Seward, and Generals Grant and Dix, he said:

"Mr. Volk, I have never sat before to sculptor or painter—only for daguerreotypes and photographs. What shall I do?" I told him I would only take the measurement of his head and

shoulders that time, and next morning, Saturday, I would make a cast of his face, which would save him a number of sittings. He stood up against the wall and I made a mark above his head, and then measured up to it from the floor and said:

"You are just twelve inches taller than Judge Douglas, that is six feet one inch."

Before commencing the cast next morning and knowing Mr. Lincoln's fondness for a story, I told him one in order to remove what I thought an apprehensive expression—as though he feared the operation might be dangerous, and this is the story:

I occasionally employed a little black-eyed, black-haired and dark-skinned Italian as a *formatore* in plaster work, who had related to me a short time before that himself and a comrade image-vender were "doing" Switzerland by hawking their images. One day a Swiss gentleman asked him if he could make his likeness in plaster. "Oh, yes, signor; I am a sculptor!" So Matteo Mattei—such was the name of the pretender—got some plaster, laid the big Swiss gentleman on his back, stuck a quill in either nostril for him to breathe through, and requested him to close his eyes. Then "Mat" as I called him, poured the soft plaster all over his face and forehead; then he paused for reflection; as the plaster was beginning to set he became frightened, as he had never before undertaken such a job, and had neglected to prepare the face properly, especially the gentleman's huge beard, mustache and the hair about the temples and forehead, through which, of course, the plaster had run and become solid. "Mat" made an excuse to go outside the door—"then", said he, "I run like ——."

I saw Mr. Lincoln's eyes twinkle with mirth.

"How did he get it off?" said he.

I answered that probably, after reasonable waiting for the sculptor, he had to break it off, and cut and pull out all the hair which the tenacious plaster touched, the best way he could. "Mat" said he took special pains to avoid that particular part of Switzerland after that artistic experience. But his companion, who somewhat resembled him, not know-

ing anything of his partner's performance, was soon afterwards overhauled by the gentleman and nearly cudgelled to death.

Upon hearing this, the tears actually trickled down Mr. Lincoln's bronzed cheeks, and he was at once in the best of humors. He sat naturally in the chair when I made the cast and saw every move I made in a mirror opposite, as I put the plaster on without interference with his eyesight or his free breathing through the nostrils. It was about an hour before the mold was ready to be removed, and being all in one piece, with both ears perfectly taken, it clung pretty hard, as the cheek-bones were higher than the jaws at the lobe of the ear. He bent his head low and took hold of the mold and gradually worked it off without breaking or injury. It hurt a little, as a few hairs of the tender temples pulled out with the plaster and made his eyes water; but the remembrance of the poor Swiss gentleman evidently kept him in good mood.

He entered my studio on Sunday morning, remarking that a friend at the hotel (Tremont House) had invited him to attend church; "but," said Mr. Lincoln, "I thought I'd rather come and sit for the bust. The fact is," he continued, "I don't like to hear cut and dried sermons. No—when I hear a man preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees!" And he extended his long arms, at the same time suiting the action to the words. He gave me on this day a long sitting of more than four hours, and when it was concluded, went to our family apartment on the corner of the building across the corridor from the studio, to look at a collection of photographs which I had made in 1855-6-7, in Rome and Florence. While sitting in the rocking chair, he took my little son on his lap and spoke kindly to him, asking his name, age, etc. I held the photographs up and explained them to him, but I noticed a growing weariness and his eyelids closed occasionally as if he were sleepy, or were thinking of something besides Grecian and Roman statuary and architecture. Finally, he said: "These things must be very interesting to you, Mr. Volk, but the truth is I don't know much of history, and all I do know of it I have learned from law-books."



The sittings were continued daily until the Thursday following, and during their continuance he would talk almost unceasingly, telling some of the funniest and most laughable of stories, but he talked little of politics or religion during those sittings. He said: "I am bored nearly every time I sit down to a public dining-table by some one pitching into me on politics." Upon one occasion he spoke most enthusiastically of his profound admiration of Henry Clay, saying that he "almost worshipped him."

I remember also, that he paid a high compliment to the late Gen. William A. Richardson, and said: "I regard him as one of the truest men that ever lived; he sticks to Judge Douglas through thick and thin—never deserted him and never will. I admire such a man! By the by, Mr. Volk, he is now in town, and stopping at the Tremont. May I bring him with me tomorrow to see the bust?" Accordingly he brought him and two other old friends, ex-Lieut. Gov. McMurtry of Illinois and Ebenezer Peck, all of whom looked a moment at the clay model, saying it was "just like him!" Then they began to tell stories and rehearse reminiscences, one after another. I can imagine I now hear their hearty laughs, just as I can see, as if photographed, the tall figure of Lincoln striding across that stubble-field.

Many people, presumably political aspirants with an eye to future prospects, besieged my door for interviews, but I made it a rule to keep it locked, and I think Mr. Lincoln appreciated the precaution.

The last sitting was given Thursday morning and I noticed that Mr. Lincoln was in something of a hurry. I had finished the head but desired to represent his breast and brawny shoulders as nature presented them; so he stripped off his coat, waistcoat, shirt, cravat and collar, threw them on a chair, pulled his undershirt down a short distance, tying the sleeves behind him, and stood up without a murmur for an hour or so. I then said that I was done and was a thousand times obliged to him for his promptness and patience, and offered to assist him to re-dress but he said: "No, I can do it better alone." I kept at my work without looking toward him, wish-

ing to catch the form as accurately as possible while it was fresh in my memory. Mr. Lincoln left hurriedly, saying he had an engagement, and with a cordial "Good-bye! I will see you again soon," passed out. A few moments after, I recognized his steps rapidly returning. The door opened, and in he came, exclaiming: "Hello, Mr. Volk! I got down on the sidewalk and found I had forgotten to put on my undershirt, and thought it wouldn't do to go through the streets this way." Sure enough, there were the sleeves of that garment dangling below the skirt of his broadcloth frock-coat! I went at once to his assistance, and helped him to undress and redress him all right, and out he went, with a hearty laugh at the absurdity of the thing.

On Thursday, May 18, following, Mr. Lincoln received the nomination on the third ballot for President of the United States. And it happened that on the same day I was on the cars, nearing Springfield. About midday we reached Bloomington, and there learned of his nomination. At three or four o'clock we arrived at our destination. The afternoon was lovely—bright and sunny, neither too warm or too cool; the grass, trees and the hosts of blooming roses, so profuse in Springfield, appeared to be vying with the ringing bells and the waving flags.

As soon as I had brushed off the dust and registered at the old Chenery House, I went straight to Mr. Lincoln's unpretentious little two-story house. He saw me from his door or window coming down the street, and as I entered the gate, he was on the platform in front of the door, and quite alone. His face looked radiant. I exclaimed: "I am the first man from Chicago, I believe, who has the honor of congratulating you on your nomination for President." Then those two great hands took both of mine with a grasp never to be forgotten. And while shaking, I said: "Now, that you will doubtless be the next President of the United States I want to make a statue of you, and shall do my best to do you justice." Said he: "I don't doubt it, for I have come to the conclusion that you are an honest man," and with that greeting I thought my hands were in a fair way of being crushed. I was invited into

the parlor and soon Mrs. Lincoln entered holding a rose bouquet in her hand, which she presented to me after the introduction; and in return I gave her a cabinet size bust of her husband, which I had modelled from the large one, and happened to have with me. Before leaving the house it was arranged that Mr. Lincoln would give Saturday forenoon to obtaining full-length photographs to serve me for the proposed statue.

On Saturday evening the committee appointed by the convention to notify Mr. Lincoln formally of his nomination, headed by Mr. Ashmun of Massachusetts, reached Springfield by special train, bearing a large number of people, two or three hundred of whom carried rails on their shoulders, marching in military style from the train to the old State House Hall of Representatives, where they stacked them like muskets. The evening was beautiful and clear, and the entire population was astir. The bells pealed, flags waved and cannon thundered forth the triumphant nomination of Springfield's favorite and distinguished citizen. The bonfires blazed brightly and especially in front of that prim-looking white house on Eighth street. The committee and the vast crowd following, passed in at the front door and made their exit through the kitchen door in the rear, Mr. Lincoln giving them all a hearty shake of the hand as they passed him in the parlor.

After it was all over and the crowd dispersed, late in the evening I took a stroll and passed the house. A few small boys, only, were in the street, trying to keep up a little blaze among the dying embers of the bonfire. One of them cried out:

"Here, Bill Lincoln—here's a stick."

Another chimed in:

"I've got a good one, Bill"—a picket he had slyly knocked from a door-yard fence.

By previous appointment I was to cast Mr. Lincoln's hands on the Sunday following this memorable Saturday, at nine A. M. I found him ready, but he looked more grave and serious than he had appeared on the previous days. I wished him to hold something in his right hand and he looked for a

piece of pasteboard but could find none. I told him a round stick would do as well as anything. Thereupon he went to the woodshed and I heard the saw go, and he soon returned to the dining-room (where I did the work), whittling off the end of a piece of broom-handle. I remarked to him that he need not whittle off the edges.

"Oh, well," said he, "I thought I would like to have it nice."

When I had successfully cast the mold of the right hand, I began the left, pausing a few moments to hear Mr. Lincoln tell me about a scar on the thumb.

"You have heard that they call me a rail-splitter, and you saw them carrying rails in the procession Saturday evening; well, it is true that I did split rails, and one day, while I was sharpening a wedge on a log, the ax glanced and nearly took my thumb off, and there is the scar, you see."

The right hand appeared swollen as compared with the left on account of excessive hand-shaking the evening before; this difference is distinctly shown in the cast.

That Sunday evening I returned to Chicago with the molds of his hands, three photographic negatives of him, the identical black alpaca campaign-suit of 1858, and a pair of Lynn newly-made pegged boots. The clothes were all burned up in the great Chicago fire. The casts of the face and hands I saved by taking them with me to Rome and they have crossed the sea four times.

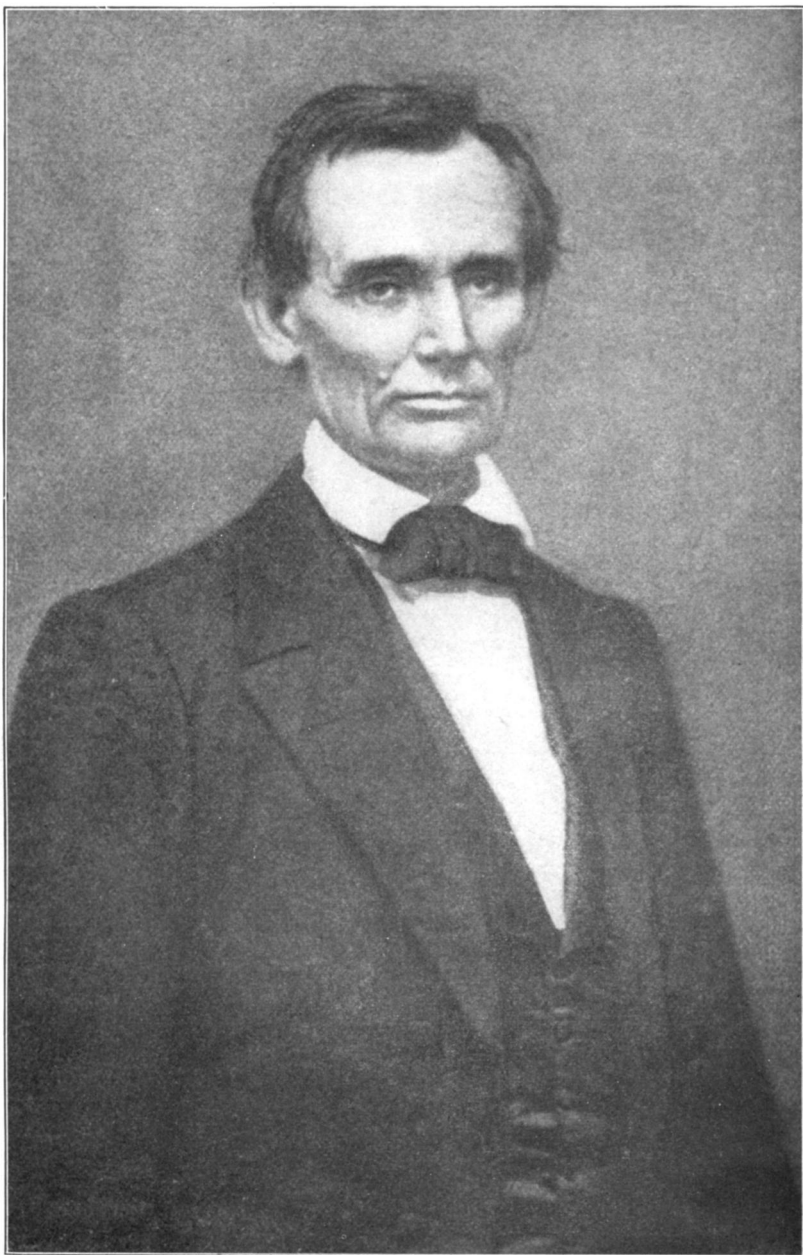
The last time I saw Mr. Lincoln was in January, 1861, at his house in Springfield. His little parlor was full of friends and politicians. He introduced me to them all, and remarked to me aside, that since he had sat to me for his bust, he had lost forty pounds in weight. This was easily perceptible, for the lines of his jaws were very sharply defined through the short beard which he was allowing to grow. Then he returned to the company and announced in a general way that I had made a bust of him before his nomination and that he was then giving daily sittings at the St. Nicholas Hotel to another sculptor; that he had sat to him for a week or more, but could not see the likeness, though he might yet bring it out.

“But,” continued Mr. Lincoln, “in two or three days after Mr. Volk commenced my bust, there was the animal himself.”

And this was about the last, if not the last remark I ever heard him utter, except the good-bye and his good wishes for my success.

I have omitted to say that when sitting in April for the model, and speaking of his Cooper Institute speech, delivered in New York a short time before, he said that he had arranged and composed this speech in his mind while going on the cars from Camden to Jersey City. When having his photograph taken at Springfield, he spoke of Colonel Ellsworth, whom he had met a short time before, and whose company of Zouaves he had seen drill. Lincoln said:

“He is the greatest little man I ever met.”



ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

From a photograph by M. B. Brady made in New York February 27, 1860,  
the day the Cooper Institute Speech was delivered.

## Comments and Corrections on "The Lincoln Life-Mask and How it was Made"

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The contribution to *The Century Magazine* of December, 1881, by Leonard Volk, giving the circumstances preceding and connected with "The Lincoln Life-Mask and How It Was Made," is a very valuable contribution in many ways.

To the artists and sculptors this mask is of indispensable value for with them it has settled forever the bony formation and facial outlines of Mr. Lincoln's remarkable face and head. In this respect it can never have any adequate comparison. To the student of Mr. Lincoln's personal peculiarities, the story Mr. Volk gives of his interviews with Lincoln during the sittings, is exceedingly interesting and revealing in many ways and we are grateful for the brief account he has written.

But there are explanations called for by some of Mr. Volk's descriptions of Lincoln's personality and manners, and corrections required by other statements he makes that he no doubt inadvertently placed in his otherwise most excellent account. The most important correction required is the statement in Mr. Volk's last paragraph where he reports Mr. Lincoln saying that the Cooper Institute speech was "composed in his mind while going in the cars from Camden to Jersey City." Because of my own opportunities for observation of Mr. Lincoln while near him through several years, I wish to make these comments, correcting some and explaining others of Volk's statements in his *Century Magazine* article.

In his sixth paragraph Mr. Volk says, at his first introduction Mr. Lincoln grasped his hand in "both his large hands

with a vise-like grip and looked down into my face with his beaming, dark, dull eyes." That Mr. Lincoln's eyes had all these shades of expression as well as some others, is quite correct; but he never bestowed their variety on a stranger at any one time, as Mr. Volk's pen records their appearance when "beaming" on him at this first introduction. Volk meant no doubt to express by his description of Lincoln's eyes, that they were changeful in their expression far more than the ordinary men he had met in his professional work. He gives in that sentence an artist's appreciation of Mr. Lincoln's expressive eyes as he recalled seeing them during the various sittings Lincoln had with him twenty years before.

As I recall the variations of Mr. Lincoln's changeful features, and more especially his expressive eyes, they never impressed me as rapidly changeful ones. Mentally he was slow in his transitions from one of his moods to another. All his facial muscles of expression responded more readily to reveal his thoughts than did his eyes. The eyes were reserved and lit up later to reveal the inner fires of Lincoln's feelings and thoughts.

Mr. Volk tells of meeting Mr. Lincoln again at Chicago, "in the United States District Courtroom, his feet on the edge of a table, one of his fingers thrust in his mouth, and his long, dark hair standing out at every imaginable angle, apparently uncombed for a week. He was surrounded by a group of lawyers, such as James F. Joy, Isaac N. Arnold, Thomas Hoyne and others."

The position of Mr. Lincoln with his feet on the table and the view of him with his "dark hair in every imaginable angle," were characteristic ones of Lincoln in his easy office-negligee manner. The careless arrangement of his locks was caused by a habit he had, of which he was unconscious, of frequently thrusting by a quick movement of first one hand and then the other upward from the temple through his hair, past the crown of his head. This left his locks in that careless abandon Volk describes. The manner of his thrusting his fingers through his hair was so frequent and characteristic with Lincoln that Volk made a mistake in consenting to Lincoln's



that he have his hair trimmed before taking his mask. He usually wore his hair longer than Volk's cast shows, and those who recall Mr. Lincoln as he appeared in the office life, the courtroom or out-door platform speaking, associate his rugged and expressive face with the crown of abundant locks that he wore and that had been tossed by his long fingers in unstudied abandon at all angles over his head. The short hair in Volk's mask of Lincoln with the ears standing out less at right angles from the head than they did, are the only serious defects noticed by those who saw him daily during his residence in Springfield.

To the additional mention by Volk in the same sentence, that Lincoln had "one of his fingers thrust in his mouth," I must demur and contradict. Mr. Lincoln was neat and in all personal ways free from offensive peculiarities. He was never addicted to so crude and unsightly a mannerism as "holding one of his fingers thrust in his mouth." This charge requires a special explanation of another of Lincoln's habits for correctly understanding Mr. Volk's mistake. Mr. Lincoln had at times, the peculiarity of supporting his face with his hand, when he was attentively listening to some one, or meditating on a subject that absorbed his thoughts. He was then oblivious to all else and had at such times a habit of placing the thumb of his left hand below his chin with his index finger partly curved and extending to his lips, or sometimes laying across them and along the side of his nose. This was no doubt the position that Volk noticed and tells us about, and mistook as being "the finger thrust in his mouth."

When Mr. Lincoln was sitting at his office table writing and had paused, seeming to be meditating of what he should write, he usually placed his left elbow on the table, his chin on his thumb, with the index finger as described above, and the three other fingers closed on the palm of the hand, thus with his thumb partly supporting the chin that rested in his large hand. I have seen him, in the privacy of the office, maintain this position as immovable as a statue for more than half an hour, though generally less time, if not writing, but while he

was listening to some one addressing him on a subject he was deeply interested in.

Mr. Volk was correct in saying there was a foot's difference in the height of Senator Douglas and Mr. Lincoln. The latter's height was, however, more than six feet one inch, as Volk says. Mr. Lincoln was six feet four inches, and Douglas' height was certainly not less than five feet four inches, instead of five feet one inch, as Volk gives it. The "Little Giant" was always sensitive about any reflections regarding his height and Volk's taking three inches from his crown must not remain uncorrected.

To any one familiar with a gentleman's attire it is manifestly absurd that Mr. Lincoln discovered after leaving Volk's studio and descending the stairs that the "sleeves of his undershirt were dangling below the skirts of his broadcloth frock-coat," as Volk described them. It is quite evident that in the first event, when the undergarment having been released from his arms and neck and "the sleeves tied behind him," while Volk was taking the cast, that it would have there lain in folds around Lincoln's waist. When the latter put on his outer linen shirt and his vest and then his frock-coat over all, the offending negligee would only have been visible by the enlarged waist line revealing it. It was probable, by this fullness that Mr. Lincoln himself recognized he was not properly "harnessed up for the street," as he would usually have remarked, as the reason for his return to the studio to properly arrange this undergarment. Why do reminiscent pens, when writing about Mr. Lincoln, so persistently seek the most grotesque posing of him that they possibly can present, instead of describing the clean, plain, simple-mannered man that he always was? They reflect their own coarseness and vulgarity, and not Mr. Lincoln's.

This latter incident makes opportune the mention here that Mrs. Lincoln was in the habit of giving her careful attention to the quality and fitting of all articles connected with her husband's wardrobe as well as to their proper distribution on his person when he was dressed and left their home, or wher-

ever they were together when away from home. Mr. Lincoln had become so accustomed to this thoughtful oversight by Mrs. Lincoln that when away from his wife's inspection, he was more helpless in matters regarding his health, his dress and his personal appearance, than most men are. His mind was always engaged on things he deemed more important to him than his clothing or his food, and this little omission in his dressing to leave the studio, very well illustrates his inattention to "Those little links which make up the chain of woman's happiness," that Miss Owen, in 1866, mentioned about Mr. Lincoln's personal habits, as they appeared to her as early as in 1836 and 1837, when they were friends at Salem. This neglect was apparent through the years I was near him and if Mrs. Lincoln was away from their home for several days, this absence was more or less recognized at the office, in Mr. Lincoln's personal apparel, and the disregard he had of any regular hours for his mealtime.

The most important correction to be made in Mr. Volk's article is the statement he makes in his last paragraph. In that he reports Mr. Lincoln saying, "when sitting in April for the model, and speaking of the Cooper Institute speech, delivered in New York a short time before, he (Lincoln) said he 'had arranged and composed this speech in his mind while going from Camden to Jersey City' ". So seriously is Mr. Volk's memory at fault in his quoting Mr. Lincoln on this subject, and so very different are the facts from his statement, that it is important for the truth of history, to mention the facts and relate some incidents connected with the preparation and delivery of that celebrated Cooper Institute speech.

I have told elsewhere in Chapter 13 of "My Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln," with a fullness of detail I will not here repeat, the circumstances connected with Mr. Lincoln's preparation for, and his studious care in the composition of the Cooper Institute speech\*. Without a doubt he devoted more time to research and gave more thought to this

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\*This volume will be brought into publication by Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons in the early months of 1916.

speech than any he ever delivered. When he left Springfield for New York for its delivery, he carried with him the manuscript finished, just as he delivered it.

I was in the Lincoln & Herndon law office daily during the three or four months while Mr. Lincoln—between the intervals of his law business—was writing and revising this great speech. He spent most of this time, at first, in the study and arrangement of the historical facts he decided to use. These he collected or verified at the State Library. His discussions with Herndon and the Hon. Newton Bateman whose office adjoined theirs, as to the historical facts and the arrangement of these in his speech, were frequent and full of interest to the two young law students who were privileged to be present at that time.

It was past the middle of February, 1860, when the speech was completed in manuscript form and put into the folder ready for Mr. Lincoln's departure to New York. And even later, every day, until it was placed in his traveling satchel and he had departed, he took out the sheets and carefully went over the pages, making notations here and there, and even writing whole pages over again.

The opinion and estimate of those who heard this speech in New York is the more convincing criterion of its value than anything Mr. Lincoln's Springfield friends might say of it. The considerations these new and more critical friends had of him and his speech before and after its delivery are strikingly contrasting ones. I shall therefore give most space here to their estimate.

The most comprehensive and appreciative presentation of facts regarding this Cooper Institute speech ever published, was that issued by the "Young Men's Republican Union," of New York City, in September, 1860. This organization in May of that year had decided to publish a revised edition for general campaign distribution, preceding the presidential election. They wished this reprint to have such historical and analytical notes as would authenticate the statements and principles which Mr. Lincoln had presented in the speech.

With this in view they wrote Mr. Lincoln for the notes and references he had collated in its preparation. Lincoln replied that he had not preserved such memoranda as he had used at the time, and that he was then too busy to examine the authorities again. The facts connected with this correspondence can be best understood and appreciated by giving the following letters that were exchanged between Mr. Charles C. Nott and Mr. Lincoln, dated May 23 and 31, 1860, respectively.

These letters show the appreciation of this speech by eastern Republicans so soon after its delivery. Mr. Lincoln's reply is even more interesting, for it indicates the maturity and independence of his thoughts on the political issues then distracting the country. He had at that early date a masterful self-confidence in his political opinions. He was unwilling to have any corrections, from even his scholarly eastern friends "that would change the sense, or modify to a hair's breadth," what he had said before them that night of February 27th, 1860. It will be recalled that Mr. Lincoln wrote this reply to the New York Republican Club only seventeen days before the National Republican Convention that nominated him as their candidate for President, was to meet in Chicago. These letters are as follows:

69 Wall St., New York.  
May 23, 1860.

Dear Sir:—

I enclose a copy of your address in New York.

We (The Young Men's Rep. Union) design to publish a new edition in larger type and better form, with such notes and references as will best attract readers seeking information. Have you any memoranda of your investigations which you would approve of inserting?

You and your western friends, I think, underrate this speech. It has produced a greater effect here than any other single speech. It is the real platform in the Eastern States, and must carry the conservative element in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Therefore, I desire that it should be as nearly perfect as may be. Most of the emendations are trivial and do

not affect the substance—all are merely suggested for your judgment.

I cannot help adding that this speech is an extraordinary example of condensed English. After some experience in criticising for reviews, I find hardly anything to touch and nothing to omit. It is the only one I know of which I cannot *shorten* and—like a good arch—moving one word tumbles a whole sentence down.

Finally—it being a bad and foolish thing for a candidate to write letters, and you having doubtless more to do of that than is pleasant or profitable, we will not add to your burden in that regard, but if you will let any friend who has nothing to do, advise us as to your wishes, in this or any other matter, we will try to carry them out.

Respectfully,  
Charles C. Nott.

To Hon. Abraham Lincoln.  
Mr. Lincoln promptly replied as follows:  
Springfield, Ills., May 31, 1860.

Charles C. Nott, Esq.

*My dear Sir:*

Yours of the 23rd, accompanied by a copy of the speech delivered by me at the Cooper Institute, and upon which you have made some notes for emendations, was received some days ago. Of course I would not object to, but would be pleased rather, with a more perfect edition of that speech.

I did not preserve memoranda of my investigations; and I could not now re-examine, and make notes, without an expenditure of time which I can not bestow upon it. Some of your notes I do not understand.

So far as it is intended merely to improve in grammar, elegance of composition, I am quite agreed; but I do not wish the sense changed, or modified, to a hair's breadth. And you, not having studied the particular points so closely as I have, can not be quite sure that you do not change the sense when you do not intend it. For instance, in a note at the bottom of the first page you propose to sub-

stitute "Democrats" for "Douglas." But what I am saying there is *true* of Douglas, and it is not true of "Democrats" generally; so that the proposed substitution would be a very considerable blunder. Your proposed insertion of "residences" though it would do little or no harm, is not at all necessary to the sense I was trying to convey. On page 5, your proposed grammatical change would certainly do no harm. The "*impudently absurd*" I stick to. The striking out "*he*" and inserting "*we*" turns the sense exactly wrong. The striking out "*upon it*" leaves the sense too general and incomplete. The sense is "*act as they acted upon that question*"—not as they acted generally.

After considering your proposed changes on page 7, I do not think them material, but I am willing to defer to you in relation to them.

On page 9, striking out "*to us*" is probably right. The word "*lawyer's*" I wish retained. The word "*Courts*" struck out twice I wish reduced to "Court" and retained—"court" as a collection more properly governs the plural "have" as I understand. "The" preceding "Court" in the latter case, must also be retained. The words "quite" "as" and "or" on the same page, I wish retained. The italicising and quotation marking, I have no objection to.

As to the note at the bottom, I do not think any too much is admitted. What you propose on page 11 is right. I return your copy of the speech, together with one printed here, under my own hasty supervising. That at New York was printed without any supervision by me. If you conclude to publish a new edition, allow me to see the proof sheets.

And now thanking you for your very complimentary letter, and your interest for me generally, I subscribe myself,

Your friend and servant,  
A. Lincoln.

Nothing discouraged by failing to get Mr. Lincoln's notes for the reprint, Messrs. Charles C. Nott and Cephas Brainerd undertook this. They prepared an appendix consisting of thirty-eight historical and analytical notes. These were so full that they covered nearly as many pages as the reprinted speech. The labor incident to this corroborates the mention I have made of the time and care Mr. Lincoln bestowed in collating the facts and historical data he elaborated his speech from. As late as August 18, 1909, Mr. Cephas Brainerd, who assisted Mr. Nott in making the reference notes, writes that in doing this, they "ransacked all the materials available in the libraries of New York, and also had interviews with Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Hildreth, and Mr. Goodell, who was in those times a famous anti-slavery man."

This reprint edition with these notes appeared in September, 1860, and the committee sent Mr. Lincoln two hundred and fifty copies, promising to send him as many more as he might wish. In the preface of this reprint, the editors said, in part:

"The address is characterized by wisdom, truthfulness and learning. . . . From the first line to the last—from the premises to his conclusion, the speaker travels with a swift, unerring directness that no logician had ever excelled. His argument is complete and is presented without the stiffness that usually accompanies dates and details. . . . A single simple sentence contains a chapter of history that had taken days of labor to verify and must have cost the author months of investigation to acquire."

In closing these comments, called for by Mr. Volk's unfortunate lapse of memory, I can do no better than quote a few sentences written by Judge Charles C. Nott in 1908—forty-eight years after Mr. Lincoln had delivered this speech and he and Brainerd had edited the reprint edition.

"It is difficult for younger generations of Americans to believe that three months before Mr. Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency he was neither appreciated nor known in New York. . . . The record which Mr.



Lincoln himself placed in the Congressional Directory in 1847, might still be taken as the record of his public and official life. 'Born February 12th, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. Education defective. Profession a lawyer. Have been a captain of Volunteers in the Black Hawk War. Postmaster in a very small office. Four times a member of the Illinois Legislature and a member of the lower house of Congress.' Was this the record of a man who should be made the head of a nation in troubled times? In the estimation of thoughtful Americans east of the Alleghanies all that they knew of Mr. Lincoln justified them in regarding him as only 'a Western stump orator'—successful, distinguished, but nothing higher than that—a Western stump orator, who had dared to brave one of the strongest men in the Western States, and who had done so with wonderful ability and moral success. . . .

"When Mr. Lincoln closed his address, he had arisen to the rank of statesman, and had stamped himself a statesman peculiarly fitted for the exigency of the hour. . . . The Cooper Institute address is one of the most important addresses ever delivered in the life of this nation, for at an eventful time it changed the course of history."